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Eglinton Castle Jan.y 21.th 1845

My dear Mother

I think you will interested with an account of this fine place where I am staying, and where I am very kindly treated by the Earl & Countess of Eglinton — But I must first tell how I got here over the long distance of 400 miles — The Birmingham rail road brought me above 200 in one day to Fleetwood a sea port, and the carriages are so large & comfortable that I felt no kind of fatigue or even cold — at Birmingham I got dinner which cost me 2/6 — The journey cost £3.

At Fleetwood I proceeded by sea in a Steamer at night which was pleasant at first by moonlight & fair wind, but at 10 o clock an ugly sea got up that made me go to bed, where I was soon very sea sick until 3 o clock in the morning, when the weather changed and at 9 I arrived in safety at the Scotch Port of Ardrossan, in a very beautiful morning, of sunshine & frost tho' not at all cold — I thought the scenery very fine indeed

very pleased me - for the seeing the pleasant sunshine was delightfull after such dark dismall weather in London so you in 23 hours I arrived here which is wonderfull as I was not in the least tired & could have began to paint the moment I arrived - I was most graciously received on my arrival, by the Countess would not let me paint until Monday I came here on Saturday last Lord Lyttelton was going out coursing with 12 pair of Greyhounds & many friends & I was invited to join - When we came down upon a single pair of dogs were let go & the run was over hill & dale we all following on foot - We have sometimes excellent coursing - When the dozen pair were all tired we returned to the Castle to lunch at 3 o'clock this would be an excellent dinner - After I was shown the post of honour intended for my picture which is the best in the house - opposite to the magnificent silver testimonial of the Tournament there are two pictures of mine already in the room - You can have no idea of the large size & magnificence of the rooms in this Castle - In dining room are portraits of all the Earls & Countesses of Eglinton amounting to 13 - all life size

– At ½ p. 6 the bell rang to dress – and I was shown my room with a capital fire & candles – every room has a fire – at ½ p. 7 the gong sounded for dinner & the company all assembled in the drawing room. sweetly dressed – the dinner was not over till near 10 – the side boards were all decorated with the magnificent gold & silver cups & Vases – won in the races by Ld E & at least 50 all piled up & making a brilliant show. – at 10 the Ladies left & we soon followed to the drawing room – the gentlemen soon played at cards I read the newspapers – the Ladies played on the piano Forte & at 12 we all returned to rest. – I found a good fire to go to bed by. – The weather on Sunday was bad & we were unable to go to Church 3 miles distant – a Clergyman read service & preached in the ch[urch] to the whole house servants & all assembled in the dining room – On Monday I began my pictures soon after breakfast (which is 10 o'clock) & my first sitting was very warmly praised & admired ___

There were a party came of 28 ladies & Gentlemen & the dinners were very splendid – But all this prosperity is too much for me

I am painting the Countess & her infant son Lord Morpeth
now about 3 years old – I hope I shall succeed, certainly I
have every encouragement

Thursday Jan.y 24 – The gay company is fled &
left me in solemn state which I am glad of – how
amused you would be if you saw me sitting alone
at a splendid dinner – with a number of Servants
waiting on me – the number of different dishes to
eat & drink, the length of time employed – yet how
simple a thing ought a dinner to be & how simple
do I make it when I can. – My enjoyment was
in the happiness in my Italian life, when I
bought a halfpenny roll, a pennyworth of grapes &
a farthing worth of wine – splendor does not suit
me, but as I am ambitious of fame & fortune
I must take every thing at it comes – The splendors
of this Castle I can never forget. – 'tis very pretty
in the morn.g to see the Deer all about the park
which is 9 miles round – Ld Egmont is a very
kind, amiable young man, he makes every one
easy in his presence – I have got quite well
at once so that I have no doubt the fog made
me so ill that I could not work – I hope you & Henrietta
are well & believe me Your affectionate Sr Joseph